



SPRING 2011



TWIN CITY LINES

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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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STREETCARS IN THE PIONEER PRESS

The last few issues have featured streetcar-related news stories from the Minneapolis Tribune. Now for some from the St. Paul Pioneer Press. In the MSM collection is a scrapbook, apparently assembled by TCRT staff. It contains every St. Paul Pioneer Press streetcar story news clipping from 1940 until the end of service in 1953. Here are a few of the more entertaining ones.

Skunk Story Dec. 1943

This story concerns the troubles of an 11-year old boy who proudly captured a skunk. George Flett, 3108 Blaisdell Ave., Minneapolis, discovered the skunk near Lake Calhoun and trapped the animal in a brown paper sack.

Triumphantly he started homeward, boarding a Selby-Lake street car with a conductorette in charge. Soon passengers began holding their noses, opening windows and leaving the trolley.

The suspicious conductorette approached George, asked him if he had a skunk in the bag, but was rebuffed by the boy's refusal to answer. After the third inquiry, however, she stopped the car and gently but firmly escorted George outside.

George found himself only a few blocks from the tavern at 118 W. Lake Street where his mother works, so into the place he stalked proudly, paper bag in hand.

"My heavens!", his mother exclaimed, "what's that terrible smell?"

The Vogue Theater on Lake Street at Blaisdell, scene of the skunk incident. Norton & Peel photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



In a few moments George found himself outside again. He then strolled into the Vogue Theater, 31 W. Lake Street, and in a matter of minutes had a whole row of seats to himself. Robert Pagel, theater manager, watched his customers leaving in the middle of the show, and went inside to investigate. One whiff, and away he went to check the theater's air conditioning.

When he returned the theater was sufficiently empty so he had little trouble in locating George.

Escorted outside for the third time, George went home and solved his troubles by selling the skunk to a neighbor for 50 cents.

Trolley Wanders Afar Oct. 18, 1944

St. Paul had a lost trolley and

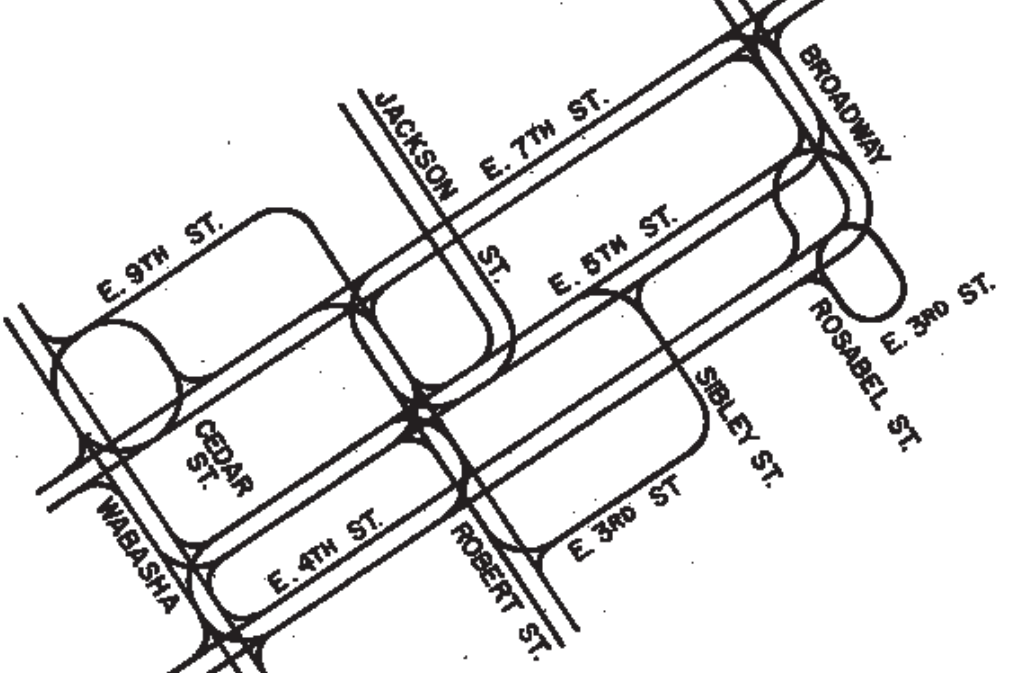
motorman Tuesday afternoon, with a Selby-Lake car wandering around the loop, over to the West Side, and finally all the way to South St. Paul while company starters and checkers puzzled their heads and hunted all the possible loop district layover spots.

As Oscar Alstead piloted his Selby-Lake car into the loop a little after 3 p.m., the starter at Seven Corners noted he was a little late, and told him to make the Robert Street loop—which would be turn north on Robert, then west on 5th, and south on Wabasha, getting back on his regular run at 4th and Wabasha, presumably gaining back the minutes he was late.

Alstead, who had been on the run only about a month, unloaded his passengers at 4th and Robert, and made the turn onto Robert all right. But at 5th he passed the switch and went across the street before realizing he was going wrong. Then he tried to rectify his mistake by backing onto 5th Street, and from there heading south on Robert.

But much to his surprise, when he reached 4th and Robert, where he

Front cover: Thomas Lowry built the Twin Cities streetcar system from 1875 until his death in 1909. In 1915, a statue and memorial to him was installed across the street from his home on Lowry Hill. This issue (see page 11) tells all about the memorial, which survives today, although it has been moved. Ed Nelson photo.
Inside front cover: In 1938, a streetcar pulls out of the Duluth Avenue station yard. Memories of a Duluth Station motorman begin on page 7. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



**Above: The track map of downtown St. Paul, where certain turns cannot be made.
Below: The intersection of 5th and Robert featured the most complex trackwork in St. Paul. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.**



thought he could get back on his line, there was no switch. He halted, puzzled, as several cars piled up behind him. Crewmen finally decided the only thing for him to do was to go ahead and end the traffic jam.

He did, traveling South Robert and Concord, peering out all the way for a wye or place where he could get his trolley turned around. But there wasn't one until South St. Paul.

Then he finally came back into the loop, successfully made his Robert Street loop, and showed up before the astounded starter at 4th and Wabasha, an hour late.

Another Lost Street Car March 19, 1949

A Minneapolis-bound Como-Harriet streetcar started to take a short cut through the St. Paul business district during the 5 p.m. rush hour Friday. Then the motorman missed a turn.

Six passengers boarded the trolley southbound on Wabasha at 7th Street. The motorman was told by a car starter to take a short loop down 7th to Cedar, over to 9th and back to Wabasha. But the motorman forgot to look at Cedar. He thought he could make it at 7th and Robert, but the track doesn't turn left there. At 7th and Broadway, the motorman took refuge on a track that turned right. It was there, after consultation with his equally dismayed conductor, that the operator turned navigation over to an unidentified passenger. At his direction, the trolley nosed along Broadway to 5th, then on 5th to Robert, where it eased into the convoy of other Como-Harriet streetcars.

Over the River 76,800 Times (and never a wet foot) Mar. 30, 1942

A total of 76,800 times across the Mississippi River—and never once has he got his feet wet!

That's the record claimed by Conductor Thomas Costello, who in his 40 years on the University Avenue interurban street car line believes he has crossed Old Man River more times than any other person alive.

Now 68 years old, Conductor Costello, entered the trolley service here in 1898. Since 1902 he has been on the inter-city line, and at 40 trips a week now figures he has crossed the Washington Avenue bridge over the river at least 76,800 times. He also figured that in that period he has ridden at least 1,224,000 miles on street cars. There are a few street car veterans with longer service, but none, he says, have been on one line so long.

"I wouldn't even have thought about claiming a record," he explains, "except that one of my passengers—he has been riding with me for years—got to figuring it up the other day.

"I've sure had plenty of experiences to look back upon. One I'll never forget. In 1902 while crossing the old Midway Transfer viaduct we ran into a herd of cattle, killing three of them and derailling our car. In those days that section was mostly farms."

Conductor Costello has less than two years to go before retirement.

Top: A St. Paul-Minneapolis streetcar crosses the Mississippi River on the Washington Avenue bridge. In the foreground is the Minneapolis Municipal Dock, the effective head of navigation before the upper harbor project built the lock at St. Anthony Falls. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Bottom: University Avenue crossed over the Minnesota Transfer Railway yards on this bridge, replaced by the present underpass in the 1930s. C. P. Gibson photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



**Edina Police-Motormen Feud Ends
After Threat to Halt Service
Nov. 26, 1943**

A feud between policemen of Edina and street car workers, which has threatened to halt all trolley service to that village, came to an end when Earl C. Sharpe, president of the Village Council, ordered the officers to “pay no attention to the street car traffic”.

At the same time he assured representatives of the street car workers union that there will be no more “pushing around” of street car crews.

The feuding, which has been going on for about two years., was climaxed Wednesday night by a “battle of words” between a policeman and a motorman.

H. C. Wick, assistant business agent of the union, announced that unless some settlement was reached immediately motormen will be forbidden to operate into Edina.

“We’ve been taking abuse for two years and something has to be done about it,” Wick said.

Wick finally agreed to allow the men to operate into the suburb until the differences can be ironed out at the special council meeting Monday night.

The dispute arose because street cars were not pulled up far enough at 50th Street and blocked traffic, Sharpe said. There formerly was a wye there, but it recently was moved to 51st Street in Minneapolis because of the “feuding”. But that didn’t stop the disputes.

An Edina policeman stopped a car at 50th Street in Edina Wednesday night, Wick said, and then followed it to the wye at 51st Street and threatened the motorman with a traffic ticket because he claimed the trolley was blocking traffic. In the resulting argument, words led to a “little pushing around” but no traffic ticket was written.

**Hit-Runners Whack Safety Isle
Dec./22, 1945**

The safety isle in the westbound traffic lane at University and Raymond was struck twice by hit-runners within an hour Friday night. Hit first by a truck, the cement base of the isle halted street car traffic for nearly an hour. Shortly afterwards, police were told an autoist also collided with the cement base, but was gone when the police arrived.

**Bullet on Track
June 14, 1946**

A 27-year-old St. Paul man escaped critical injury when he was struck in the face by a .32 caliber bullet apparently placed on the track and fired by a trolley. Erick Larson was taken to Midway Hospital and later released. Larson said he heard a muffled shot and felt a pain near his left eye.

THEATER EXTRAS

**Minneapolis Tribune
Oct. 31, 1915**

It is night, 10:30 o’clock, and Minneapolis is quiet—as quiet, at least, as a busy, hustling city can be at that hour. Suddenly the silence is broken by the clickety-clack of thousands of heels. Many theaters are pouring forth crowds. At the Auditorium a symphony concert is concluded and hundreds of music lovers give greater volume to the rhythm of the streets. At the armory a rally breaks up and a host of citizens streams forth. At Pence auditorium a fraternal society adjourns. In a half dozen hotels a score of meetings break up and the crowds rapidly fill the streets.

Then comes a play of near magic. From every direction the rumble of heels is cut by a whirring sound. A great glaring eye advances along the center of the street and behind the eye rolls a long yellow body. Then follows

another yellow and another yellow body and another and another and still more.

Seemingly the crowds are devoured by the yellow monsters. Haltingly they advance and the number of people in the street grows ever smaller.

With increasing speed the yellow monsters eat their way through the crowds. At first the advance is slow. Then as the crowd thins, progress quickens. Then there is comparative quiet again. Barely 20 minutes and an army has been gobbled up by the yellow monsters.

By a miracle of efficiency and systematic effort probably 20,000 persons who have been spilled into a district in which they could find little more than elbow room in less than half an hour have found transportation to their homes—and only a few used automobiles.

How was this modern miracle wrought?

There are five stations maintained by the street railway company. It is one of the quiet hours of the night at the car stations. A telephone bell rings in the foreman’s office and a brief conversation follows. A score of waiting men spring into action and under their guiding hands the complement of night “extra” cars, a veritable fleet, rolls out of the station and in a long chain make their way downtown.

When the final signal comes, a few minutes before the crowds begin to pour from the theaters, hotels, auditorium and the armory, these cars stand waiting at strategic points. Timed to the minute they supply the demand as it comes and move on to disgorge their loads at a thousand different corners throughout the city.

Behind that telephone message that quickened to life the machinery of the stations lay the planning of one man. Each day the division superintendent is handed a list of the entertainments to be given in the city the same night.

He checks each for unusual crowds. Then the list is handed to the head supervisor, who gets orders somewhat like the following:

“We’ll need ‘extra’ cars at the Armory, the Auditorium, Pence auditorium, and for the theater crowds. Not later than 7:30 get your men on the job at all places on this sheet as due for big crowds. Have them count the people. Tell your men in the loop district to do the same thing at the theaters. Get the figures by phone.

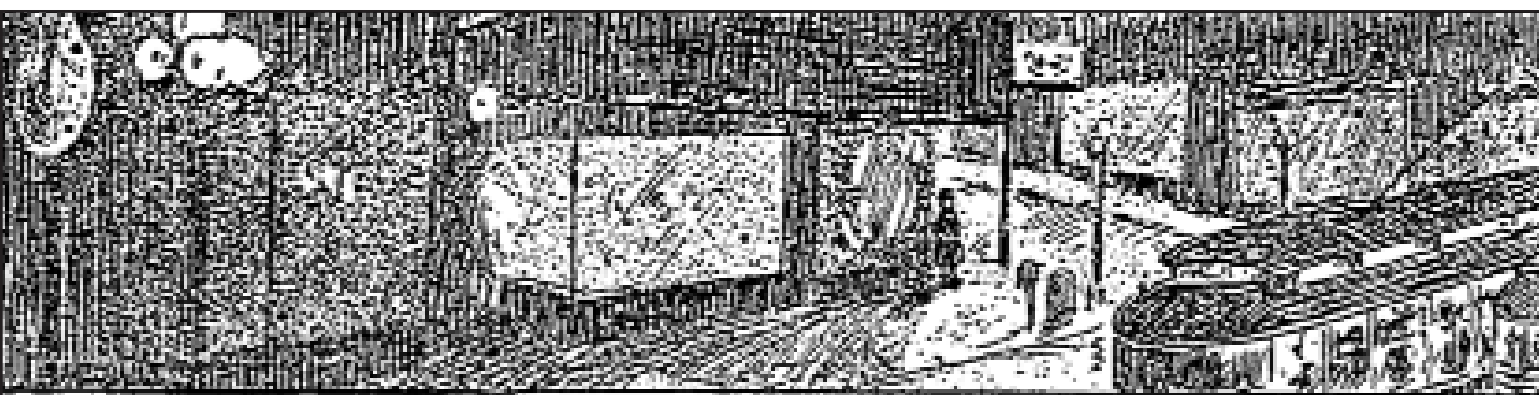
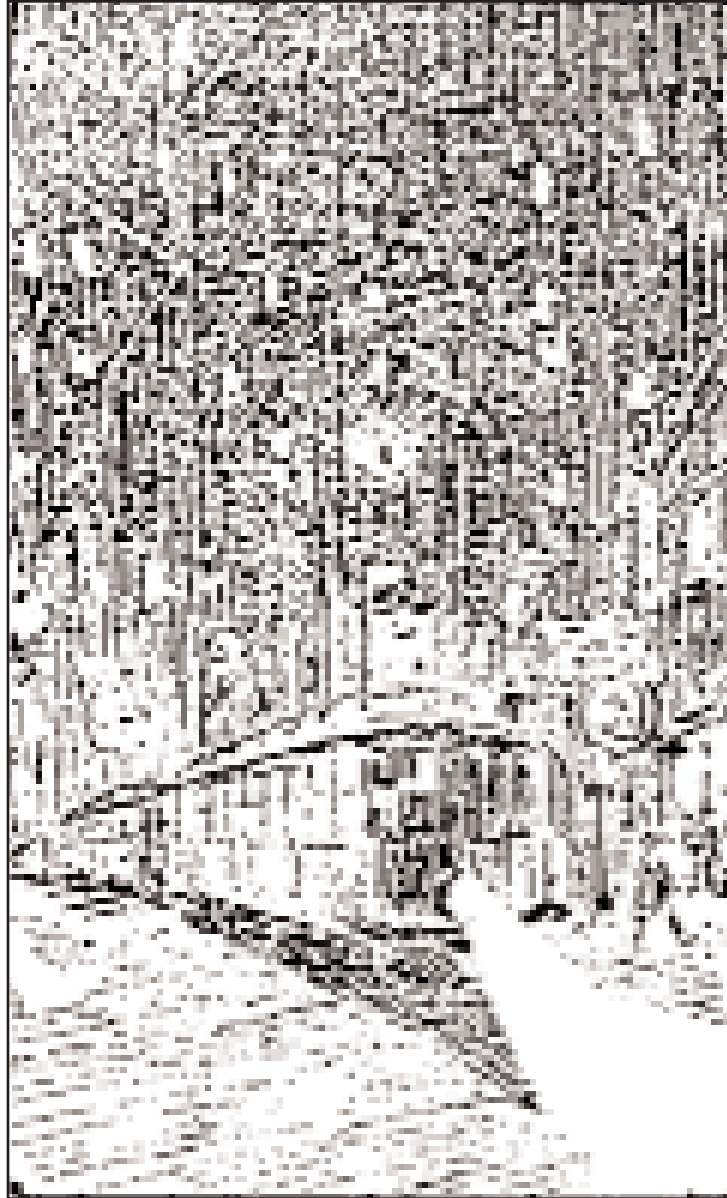
“You reckon up the number of cars needed and pass the word along to the station foreman. Have your checkers phone you about 20 minutes before each entertainment lets out so you’ll have time to get the station foreman by phone again and so they’ll have time to get their cars wherever needed to pick up the people”.

Carefully the supervisor reckons. He knows the intervals at which cars, operating on a normal schedule, will pass the points where persons are expected to gather. He knows how many the regular cars will accommodate and he knows, by close approximation, the total number of persons who will use the street cars to get home from each entertainment. These figures tell him the number of “extras” needed.

The foremen get busy. “Extra” conductors and motormen are called for the short run. The station crews see to it that the cars needed are in running order. And when the message comes ordering the “extras” to their places, the plans work without a hitch.

The normal night schedule of the cars wouldn’t suffice to care for a tenth of the crowd.

These illustrations accompanied the Minneapolis Tribune article describing how extra streetcars handled the theater closing rush.



Motorman First Person

Motorman #3375 Allen W. Cooper worked for TCRT out of Duluth Avenue Station from 1922 to 1925. He visited the Como-Harriet line in 1973, met late MSM member Bob Schumacher, and agreed to write down his memories of running streetcars. The result was a long letter to Schumacher that gives a real feel for what it was like. With a little editing, here it is.

Dear Friend Schumacher:

Since we were over and rode your car a lot of things that happened a long time ago have come to mind. It is amazing how an experience like that can stir up almost forgotten incidents that took place over 45 years ago. Something about the clicking of wheels on rail joints, the hum of the gears and the sound of the gong and the register, all add up to many recollections of a long-gone day when we were young and everything in life was a new adventure.

In the spring of 1922, I was 25 years of age, having been born near here on 4/2/1897. Times were hard and dull and there was little to do. A cousin of mine was a motorman for the TCL and worked at Duluth Avenue Station. I went to visit him and he said if work on the street cars appealed to me he would give the information to his supervisor, John Spencer, and he would perhaps recommend that they hire me. Spencer talked to me, wrote me out a note to present to a Mr. Champion, employment manager of the Company, and I went over, was hired and was assigned to Duluth Avenue Station as a motorman on 11/20/1922.

Pay was 48 cents an hour for the first year, 50 for the second and 51 from then on. We got 20 cents an hour while learning and had to pile up 180 hours with old motormen. My first lessons were from a guy named Dingess, who was an old crab, and about 40 percent deaf. Likely the foreman figured if one could survive a few runs with him,



things would go better later on. They broke in new car men on night runs, from about 3 to midnight. After my first night run with Dingess, it looked pretty hopeless to me. He told me so many things it seemed one head could never memorize it all. My cousin said it was that way when he broke in, too, but he found out in a few days things were better. Which turned out to be true in my case. Dingess' run was on Rondo-Maria and I was four nights in his company.

There was a good restaurant across the street from the car barns called the Trolley Café. A \$5 meal ticket was

Duluth Avenue Station, located on East 7th Street at Duluth Avenue on St. Paul's east side.

\$4.50 if paid in advance. The waitress punched out of the card the amount each meal cost. For about a dollar a day we got along very well. A nice sleeping room two blocks from the car station set me back \$8.00 a month. My checks used to run about \$68 to \$71 per half month depending on if we got any overtime. During winter sometimes they gave me five hours work on the snow plow. I was the third man, operating the wing.

In the early 1920s the Company had a lot of grey-haired old operators that had been with them since horse car days. Anyone with 20 or more years with them belonged to what was called their Veteran Employees Club. Spencer and Al Johnson, assistant foreman, were both members, and quite a few old motormen and conductors. From them we learned that old Tom Lowry was a hard-nosed slave driver. His first electric cars were enclosed as to passengers, but the motorman stood right out in the storm without even a windshield. I was told by some of the old-timers that a motorman actually froze to death at the controls of one of Tom Lowry's cars (according to the Minneapolis Tribune, this actually happened). And that did it, the State got after him and forced him to enclose a cab for the operator. Even in the early 20's no cars had windshield wipers.

It was very interesting work for me, this driving street cars. After farm work, mostly powered by two horses, it was thrilling to control power that seemed by comparison to be almost without limit. I resolved to learn to do a good job, a smooth job and sought to learn from older hands. At this time the Company had a very limited pension thing going and there was an old gent named Tom Montgomery who had made it. His wife had died and he was alone and miserable with nothing to do, so the Company let him drive a stub to Fort Snelling and back each day just to have something to do. It



A 1926 collage of Duluth Station employee portraits yielded these photos of people mentioned in Cooper's letter. Supervisor John Spencer hired Cooper. Cooper worked for assistant foreman Al Johnson and trained with motorman Tom Montgomery.

appeared to me that anyone who had spent a lifetime driving cars ought to have it down to a fine science. Accordingly, I made it a point to mount one of his cars and watch his technique with a view to picking up some pointers.

I got into the very front seat and gave him my undivided attention. Imagine my surprise to learn that he skipped notches on the controller, made terrible stops in which he left 10 or 15 pounds of air on the brakes, and sometimes drove off with some air still on, so that when he did release it, the car made a "jack-rabbit" start.

Back at the station I related some of this and a conductor or two said they would rather work a 9-hour run with a good operator any time that work a stub with old Tom.

One said you "needed a safety belt, attached to the fare box stanchion."

In the rush hour, it was easy to lose a little time and get behind schedule. This can result in a tendency on the part of the motorman to make rough stops and fast starts. I found out that not much was gained, especially by stops that might be compared to "throwing out an anchor". I observed that as soon as passengers (especially oldsters) find out that the motorman is making these terrific stops, he will stay put until the car comes to rest, then get up and mosey back to the rear platform. Whereas, a nice smooth stop will facilitate his getting up and walking back to the steps where he ready to alight soon as the gates were opened. For me this system actually saved me time. A few seconds at each stop adds up to minutes on a run.

By continued practice I was able to achieve a certain finesse in making a smooth stop. Many motormen applied air by spurts, ten or 15 pounds at a time, releasing it in the same fashion, sort of "steady by jerks". I found that with practice, on a properly adjusted air valve, a slower application and a steady release, graduated to near zero as the speed diminished, made for a nice smooth stop.

Of course it was against Company regulations to use any power at the same time brakes were used. And so we were instructed. But when rail was slippery due to frost, or from traffic film or just plain goo, I found that even if your brake rigging was properly adjusted, some wheels would tend to lock while the rest turned. So, when conditions warranted, I used one point on the controller, along with air. This "walked" the wheels, overcoming any tendency to slide. When the car was about to stop, then the controller could be shut off. Once an inspector was riding in the cab with me and he caught me doing this. I demonstrated



Top: The reading room at Duluth Station.

Bottom: Near every streetcar station was a cafe open around the clock to cater to the needs of TCRT employees. The Trolley Cafe was across 7th Street from Duluth Station. You can see the reflection of trolley poles and overhead wire in the window.



A typical single point, electrically powered track switch.

how smooth the stops could be without the power and how nice with it. He agreed with me, said he failed to see much harm in it.

I found out later that old timers working the Owl runs used to set air full "on" while eating their lunch at the end of the line, then put the controller on first point and leave it there. On the front exit cars the resistance grids were in the cab. In a minute or two they would be cherry red and heat the cab for comfort while they ate. The Company usually did not start fires in the car stoves until around

Thanksgiving and it could get pretty cool in those cabs.

The Interurban had carbon arc headlights with a shielded resistance to the left of the motorman on the wall below a window. This resistance soon heated the cab, but the Company frowned on burning headlights except when needed. Smoky Olson, the inspector, used to get on and stand to the left of the operator and I saw him put his hands over this resistance unit to see if we had been "burning holes in the daylight", as he dubbed it.

I'm going to tell you about some guys who got fired from the Company and how it came about. One of them had 15 years on the Interurban and got to drinking while off duty. Then he started coming to work partly crooked. One Sunday he came in and they saw him stagger. The foreman told him to go home and come back next morning. He was indignant, wanted to know why. They told him they'd explain in the morning. Which they did, with a final settlement.

Another motorman was fired for putting snoose juice in the keyhole of a track block signal. He had a run on Rice-Stryker. On the Stryker end of the line there was a single track for about half a mile, starting at the bottom of a hill. There was a signal on a pole and the motorman had to dismount, unlock the box and put the light on, reversing the process when he came back down. No motorman was supposed to go up while the light was on. This guy had an owl run and reasoned there were no other cars out there between midnight and 5 AM, so why all the bother? He reported the keyhole was full of ice. The Company sent out men to thaw it out and they reported it was tobacco juice. After this kept happening they fired him, said they could not take chances, a snow plow or wire car might be up there, etc...

One young motorman had a run on

Rice-Stryker one day and when he came to the single track signal near the Stryker end of the line, the light was lit. He reasoned there couldn't possibly be a car up there, that someone had forgotten to turn off the light when they came down the hill. So he drove onto the single track and the spring switch snapped behind his car. Before he had gone a hundred feet the outbound car appeared at the top of the year. He realized he had pulled a real boner and would have some explaining to do to wiggle out of it. He got out and with his switch rod pried open the spring switch, stuck his monkey wrench in to hold the switch open and took the switch rod out. Then he backed the car onto the double track and let the other car proceed. No one reported the incident.

There was another conductor who was a chicken fancier. He boasted he had 30 hens in his coop in the back yard and that "the company is buying the feed for them." This remark somehow got around to the front office. He had developed what he thought was a fool-proof way to steal a little money from the company. He observed that the diameter of a coin or token determined if it registered 1, 5, 6 or 10 cents in the farebox meter. He also observed that a penny is only slightly larger than a dime. So, he worked over some dimes with a ball-peen hammer. Then he kept a couple of them in the bottom of his changer. When a feller got on, along with his date, and wanted change for two bits this guy gave him 5 pennies, 2 nickels and a dime. Invariably the man would throw in a dime and 2 pennies (the fare was 12 cents) and keep the nickel. So the dime would go right into the farebox and come right back to his changer, and he would be ahead 9 cents. How did they catch him? Well, any conductor could happen to get a crippled dime in his box, but when one conductor kept getting them they

knew he was guilty. They told him he could now "spend all his time raising poultry".

Getting back to snooze: sometimes on making a relief of an old day man, there would be so much snoose juice in the bottom of the coal bucket it would near put out the fire when the last of the coal went into the stove. Some of them leaned forward and spit down behind the controller. A car or two shorted out from this and the company put up a bulletin prohibiting any more spitting there.

We had a few electric switches; one at 7th and Maria, one at Seven Corners, and one coming up the hill in Stillwater as you approached 3rd Street. When you operated these they worked with great speed and a report like a pistol. In rainy weather or when snow was melting there was water in them, and when they were thrown, water would squirt up to a height of 8 to 10 feet. One motorman told of seeing a young lady approaching the switch, just as he was about to throw it, from some distance away. This stinker waited until the lady was directly over the switch and then threw it and she got a shot of ice water that made her jump "four feet off the ground".

People nowadays can hardly realize the role the street railway system played in the days before the general use of autos. Even after cars got quite plentiful, when snow and ice came, along with below zero temperatures, people laid aside their cars (maybe even put them up on blocks) and rode the street cars.

Allen



The Thomas Lowry Memorial

-Peter S. Sussman

"'Tom Lowry is dead!' With incredible swiftness the news spread among the employees of the Twin City Rapid Transit company", reported the Minneapolis Tribune of February 5, 1909, "It went from mouth to mouth in a hushed, awed whisper: 'Our 'Old Man' is dead'. As soon as it was given out from the house that Mr. Lowry was dead, the telephones conveyed the intelligence to the many street car barns and the outgoing men received the sad tidings as soon as the newspapers. As they met their comrades they passed the word along and within a few moments the news was spread all over the city and few of those who rode on street cars had to buy an extra to find out the principal event of the day".

Plans to observe Lowry's funeral were described the following day in the Tribune: "Flags will be raised to half mast this afternoon on many of

the city's public institutions and on many business houses and private residences in respect to the memory of Thomas Lowry, whose funeral service will begin at 2 p.m. at the residence, 2 Groveland terrace."

"At 2 o'clock sharp, the power will be turned off from the lines of the Twin City Rapid Transit company, and every car in operation by the system within the Twin cities and on the suburban lines will be stopped for five minutes, in recognition of the burial of the president of the company."

"The same observance will be made throughout the system of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway company of which Mr. Lowry was the president. The system stretches from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., on the east to Portal, N. D., on the west, and comprises 2,400 miles of trackage. For the five minutes beginning at 2 p.m. every bit of rolling equipment from fast express to switch engine will be stopped, as a result of orders sent from the general offices yesterday.

Reverend Marion Shutter spoke of Lowry at the private service: "It was given him, while he built with things material, to build also in things immortal. The time may come when the tracks of his railways will be but strips of rust, but the good he has done will last forever. His smile was a benediction, his handicap an inspiration. His delightful wit and pleasantry that so often illumined a problem and carried a point, would quite as often put the blue demons in some weary and disheartened soul to flight."

Tributes to Lowry filled the newspapers of the Twin Cities and were published as far away as the Eastern financial markets in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

Representative of the tributes was a Minneapolis Tribune editorial entitled "A Life That Was Worth Living":

"The life work of Thomas Lowry



The Lowry residence at 2 Groveland Terrace, current site of the Walker Art Center. Sweet photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

was the upbuilding of the Northwest. His part in that is his best public monument, as the love of his fellows is his best private memorial. Millions have shared this work with him, but he was one of the few leaders chosen by fitness and fate for immortality in the history of it".

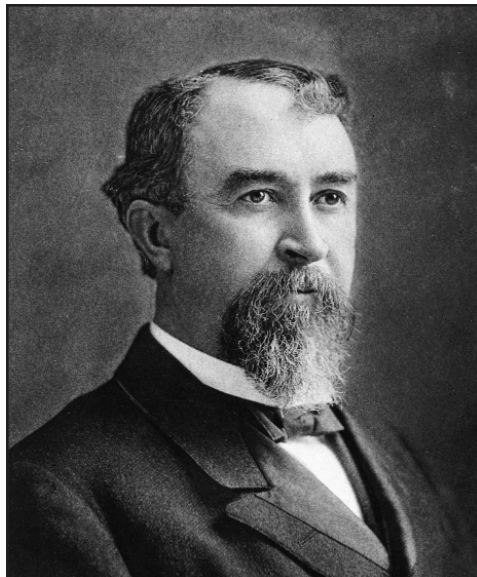
"In earlier times of trial and despair, of doubt and adversity, he was a tower of strength for Minneapolis. Few were too self-reliant to lean on it, and few of the city's great business successes are out of his spiritual debt. In that sense all of it is his monument."

The best eulogy may have come from the 'Father of Minneapolis Parks', Charles M. Loring, "I have known Thomas Lowry ever since he came to Minneapolis and he has been as good a citizen as this city will ever have. When he first came to Minneapolis he had little or no money, but he had activity

and a fund of humor, what is more, ambition"

"He bought the street railway and he got it for about 25 cents on the dollar. The stock was worth little or nothing at that time and many people had doubts as to his good judgment, but subsequent years have shown just how clever he was. He realized that Minneapolis was to be a great city and he showed that he had faith in it. He knew that Minneapolis would make good".

"Mr. Lowry's strict honesty and integrity have always been among his chief characteristics. He was always had a strong sense of humor also. As a matter of fact, he was always like Lincoln in that respect. He was fond of telling stories and they were in point, too. Another characteristic was his generosity. He never lost an opportunity to do a good turn for



Thomas Lowry



Sculptor Karl Bitter in his studio.

anyone and he had hundreds of friends who would do almost anything for him".

"I knew Mr. Lowry for more than 40 years. Two traits of his character stand out before all others as I look back through the years since I first met him – his powers of persuasion and his memory for names and faces. He was one of the most persuasive talkers I ever knew. It is said of him that on several occasions in the infancy of his street railway interests, he persuaded his creditors not only to extend the time of their claims on him but even to advance further tenders of aid, at times when they were at first inclined to cut

him short."

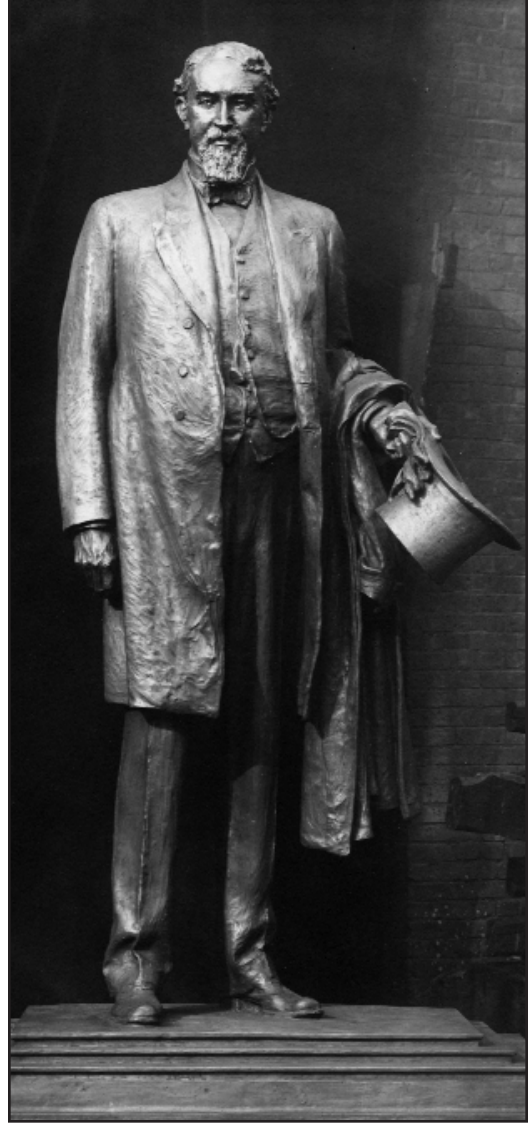
"He was a capital entertainer, delighting in telling stories, and had rare magnetic power in winning men to him. There is no question that this city will miss Mr. Lowry."

The Thomas Lowry Memorial association was organized August 8, 1910. Following Lowry's death there had been a widespread demand for some sort of memorial to the man who gave of much of himself to the upbuilding of Minneapolis. Lowry's friends finally took up the matter and the Memorial association was the result.

The original officers of the executive committee were Judge Martin B. Koon, Thomas B. Janney, B. F. Nelson, and W. A. Frisbie. Other directors were John S. Bradstreet, Frederic W. Clifford, Calvin G. Goodrich (Lowry's brother-in-law and his successor as president of TCRT), W. J. Murphy, J.E. Northrup and E. P. Wells.

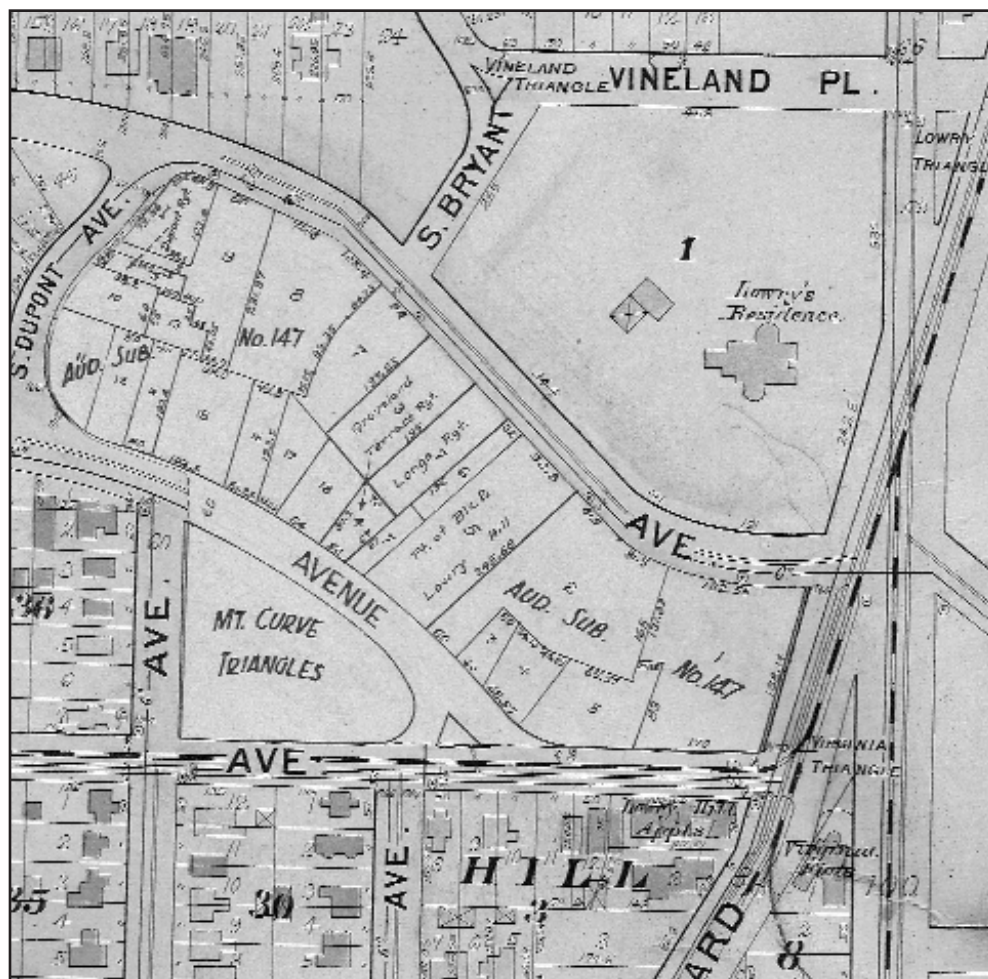
In addition to raising funds among a small group of Lowry's friends, two principal tasks were undertaken by the association in 1911 - obtaining use of a suitable site and selecting an outstanding designer.

As Minneapolis park board proceedings from the meeting of June 6, 1911, recorded, "The Thomas Lowry Memorial association petitioned the board for permission to utilize the triangle at the foot of Douglas avenue at the intersection of Hennepin and Lyndale avenue as a site for a memorial to the late Thomas Lowry. The plan is to occupy the entire plot for the memorial, which will not only be personal in its character, but will embody a tribute to the constructive civic optimism of the period in which Mr. Lowry was active." The committee



The Lowry statue in Bitter's studio, not yet mounted on the memorial. Smithsonian Institution collection.

report was subsequently adopted at the meeting of June 20, "Virginia triangle, at the intersection of Hennepin and Lyndale avenues, at the foot of Douglas avenue, will be turned over to the Thomas Lowry Memorial association to carry out plans of a sculptural, architectural and landscape nature for the creation of a memorial to the late Thomas Lowry." In December 1911 the



The 1916 plat map shows the Lowry residence, just north of the Virginia Triangle, where the memorial was erected.

Memorial association successfully petitioned the city council to add six feet of width to the narrow triangular site from the right of way of Lyndale avenue.

Virginia Triangle park was well suited as the Memorial site due both to its prominence at the crest of Lowry Hill and to its proximity to the substantial home that Thomas and Beatrice Lowry had built in 1874. This site, noted the association and Lowry's widow, was where Thomas Lowry often used to stand and look over the city after a day's work. By 1911 it was highly visible as the point "passed most frequently by Minneapolitans from every part of the city, as it is on the way to the lake region." Appropriately for a memorial site to Lowry, Virginia Triangle was bordered by three streetcar lines. The Lyndale avenue line dated from 1884. The Kenwood line, turning west on Douglas avenue from Hennepin avenue opened in 1890 and the Hennepin avenue line out to Lake Harriet opened the following year.

Near this narrow tip of a "flatiron" block, Lowry Congregational in 1890 built a small wood-framed church. They quickly realized that the surrounding streetcar lines made for too noisy a setting.

In 1900 the five story "Virginia Flats" apartment building designed by Minneapolis architect Harry Wild Jones replaced the modest church. The v-shaped plan featured a crenelated tower at its apex and took full advantage of the commanding views.

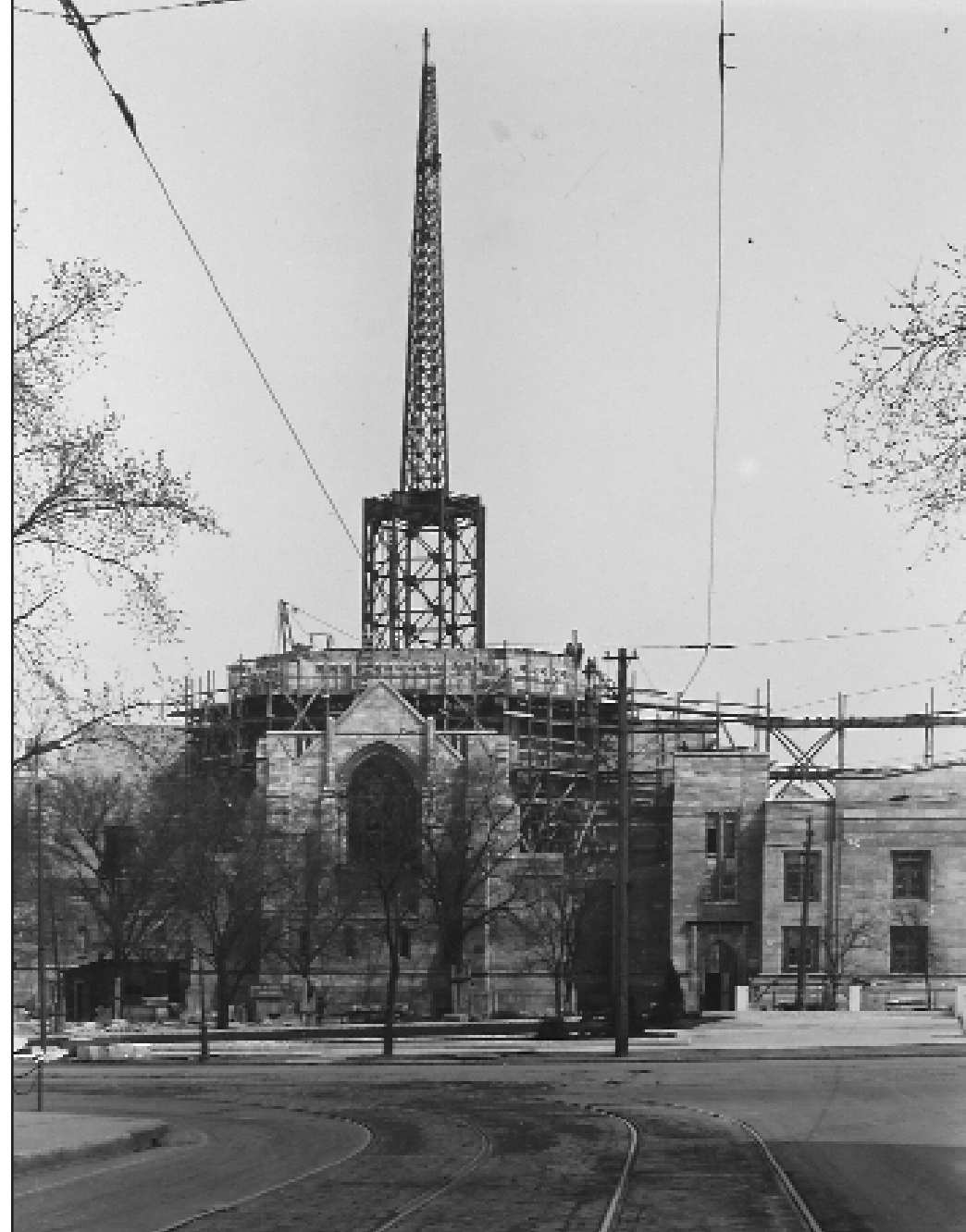
Searching out a designer, the Thomas Lowry Memorial association set high standards in order to appropriately honor their friend. As recalled in 1915 at the time of the memorial dedication, "Karl Bitter was chosen to do the Lowry memorial by the directors of the association because, after investigation all over the country, they learned that he was the one man

who was best able to do the work. Art critics the country over counseled the officers to select Mr. Bitter."

Karl Bitter, a tremendously talented Austrian-born architectural sculptor emigrated to the United States in 1889 at the age of twenty-two. Classically trained in Vienna and already accomplished at an early age, he rapidly achieved success in New York city, executing work for prominent architect Richard Morris Hunt and others. His sculptural work on Hunt's projects included Vanderbilt's Biltmore estate in North Carolina and 20 sculptural groups surmounting the Administration Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Bitter subsequently took on management roles for integrating sculpture in the architectural design schemes at the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition of 1901, the 1904 World's Fair in Saint Louis and the Panama-American Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco.

Commissions executed by Bitter included public work such as the groups of figures at the exterior of the Wisconsin state capitol and memorials honoring nationally prominent men including Thomas Jefferson and statesman Carl Schurz. Bitter returned to Austria for several extended visits and was directly influenced by the modernist trends of the early 20th century Viennese Secessionist movement, which then found expression in his subsequent work including the Lowry Memorial.

At Bitter's invitation, his Austrian friend Hans Kestranek came to the United States to collaborate on the architecture of the Lowry Memorial design over the winter of 1911-12. In his 1967 biography of Karl Bitter, James M. Dennis cited Bitter's unpublished letters to Kestranek, which provide a personal account of his work on the project. Bitter viewed the apartment building to the south as an unpleasant,



The Lowry memorial and the neighboring Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church were constructed simultaneously. This view looking east on Douglas Avenue shows the Kenwood line turning onto Hennepin. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

unavoidable limitation to the Memorial site. "The 'Virginia Flats' is an abominable, red brick building and

must be concealed by planting trees" related Bitter in a September 1911 letter. Regarding the design, he confided,



The memorial was dedicated on August 18, 1915. Note the temporary event seating for 900 people. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

begun on a nine-foot tall statue capturing the essence of the man. To aid in this Bitter had Lowry's old New York tailor make up a suit of clothes from the measurements he had of Lowry in his prime, which was then modeled by a man of similar build. Mrs. Lowry spent time in the studio over two months assisting "to secure the correct conception of the portrait features of the work".

On May 24 1912 the Minneapolis Tribune contained a notice that "Mr. John S. Bradstreet, Mr. Calvin G. Goodrich and Judge Martin B. Koon, who are in the East, are at the Holland house, New York city". The unannounced purpose of their visit was to review and approve a model of the Lowry Memorial at Bitter's studio. Photographs of the model would soon appear in the Minneapolis newspapers, prominently featured with announcements of the Memorial plans to the public.

The Minneapolis Journal of June 8, describing the Memorial, indicated it was expected to be completed within a year: "The design of Mr. Bitter, of which a plaster model is now in Minneapolis at the studio of John S. Bradstreet, provides for treatment of the plot with regard for topography of the ground, which is level on the Lyndale avenue side and rises gradually on the Hennepin avenue side. There will be a setting of marble, through the center of which a broad walk in red sandstone will lead to a flight of stone steps, at the top of which will be a pedestal. Back of the pedestal will be a three paneled screen of stone eighteen feet in height and in front of the screen, facing the triangle will be a nine-foot statue of Mr. Lowry. In the figure, the right hand of which holds

Mrs. Lowry and Judge M. B. Koon had attempted to meddle by making suggestions but agreed to drop "the insane idea of beautiful columns". The essence of Bitter's plan was to "do something more creative than just Mr. Lowry. The monument should embellish the city and I would like to make something beautiful".

Looking back on the project in his 1917 biography of Karl Bitter published by the National Sculpture Society, Ferdinand Schevill indicated

the Lowry Memorial association conceded to Bitter treatment of the triangular site to create an effective urban composition as he pleased. This was "so intelligently used to modify the plebeian literalness of the statue that the total effect is entirely different from that produced by the average bronze patriot who sounds a humorous or cacophonous note along our city thoroughfares. The notable thing was that Bitter, while doing a portrait-statue with his usual whole-hearted

sincerity, concerned himself chiefly with the monumental ensemble and the necessity of fitting it harmoniously into the city's established physiognomy".

As for the bronze portrait statue itself, the Memorial association was well pleased by Bitter's research during his two initial visits to Minneapolis. Friends of Thomas Lowry were interviewed as to his character and bearing and the available bust pictures were studied. Work was then



The memorial as built, above, and after 39 years of soot in 1954. Above: Charles Hibbard photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection. Below: Edwin Nelson photo.



the familiar silk hat. The pioneer optimism of the man has been expressed, the committee believes, and it is a commanding, buoyant figure, showing Mr. Lowry as he was known

to the thousands of Minneapolis people as he walked through the streets. The figure, standing at the crest of the hill that took its name from Mr. Lowry, will face into the Plaza. The site is



commanding. The entire ground space of the triangle will be covered with marble, and there will be a screen of shrubbery back of the stone screen, in front of which the figure will stand."

Two views look north from the memorial at the "Bottleneck". Top: Lee Brothers photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection. Bottom: Edwin Nelson photo.



the Hennepin-Lyndale intersection, where the
omo-Harriet and Bryant lines separated and
passed on either side of the Lowry memorial,
viewed from the roof of the Plaza Hotel.
Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Unexpectedly, the publication of plans almost resulted in requiring the selection of a new site, according to one of the letters from Bitter. The owner of Virginia Flats took unkindly to the Memorial wall Bitter had designed to partly screen the apartment building from public view. Though he complained to the park board over the blocking of views from his apartment units, the project would proceed as designed.

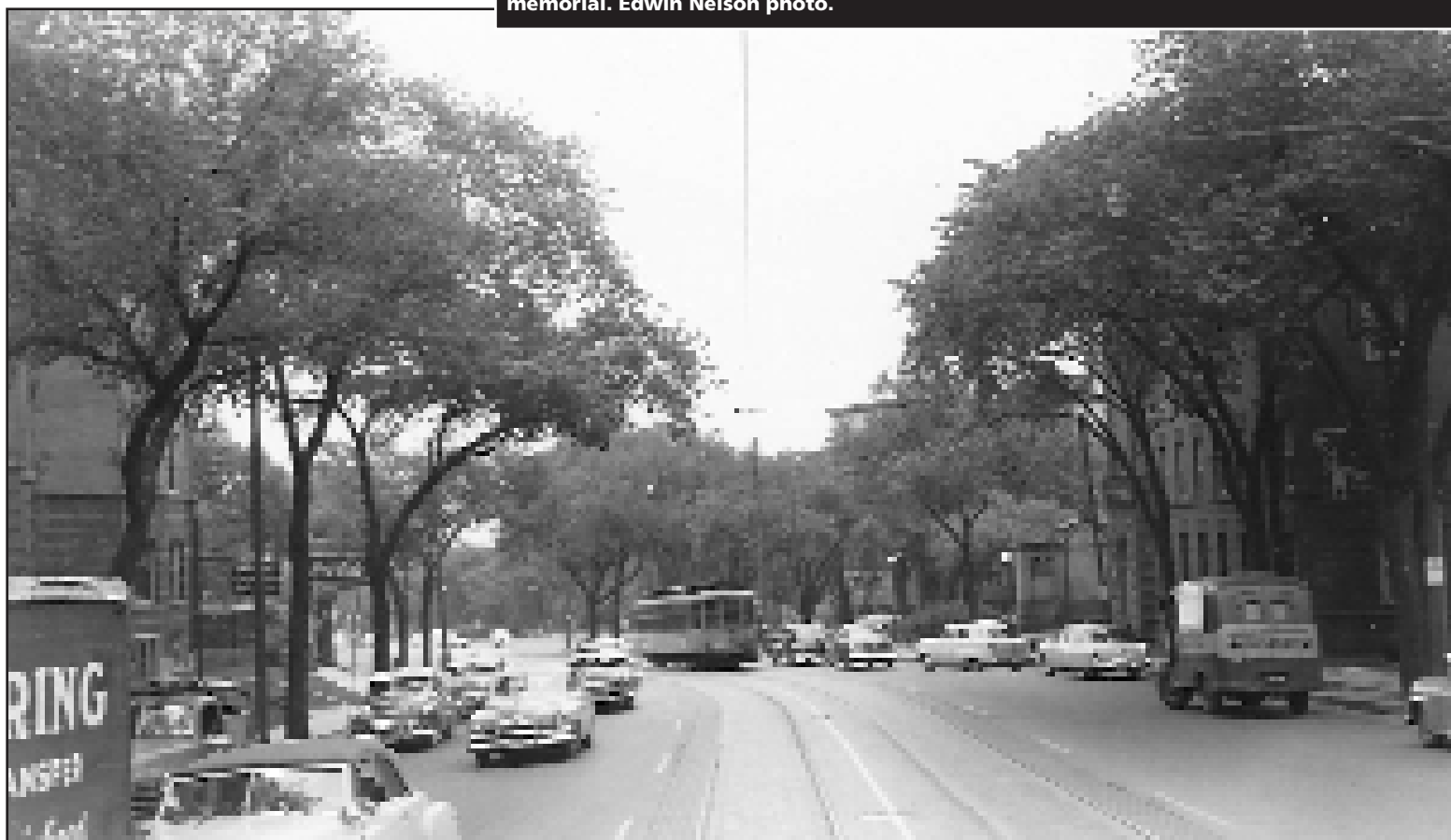
The announcement of plans was accompanied by a month long public subscription drive: "The people of Minneapolis will be given opportunity, as they may wish, to subscribe to the memorial, any sum from \$1 up will be acceptable, and every subscriber will receive a certificate of membership in the Thomas Lowry Memorial association, but there will be no solicitation of funds. The subscription opportunity is presented because, the committee believes, there are many Minneapolis people who knew Mr. Lowry so well that they would not want a memorial to him erected without having opportunity to participate, but the most necessary portion of the fund has already been guaranteed by those who were Mr. Lowry's most intimate friends."

Among those sending in contributions was John F. Calderwood from New York, former controller of the city of Minneapolis and later auditor of the Twin City Rapid Transit company, who in a letter to Judge M. B. Koon paid a high tribute to Lowry and also gave an idea of the figure of Lowry, which he had seen in Bitter's studio. "I shall consider it one of the greatest honors of my life to be

associated with the Thomas Lowry Memorial association." Calderwood wrote of his visit to Bitter's studio, "There I sat, as never before, in silence and reverie, in the mellow light of a beautiful June day which shone on the superb figure of the grand man we all love, and only wishing he could speak and I could tell him of my impressions of the character of the men I have met in the last ten years, and how by contrast, my love and respect for his memory has increased. The figure as a whole is remarkable and the more so when you consider it is all worked out from suggestion. The pose of the right arm and hand is characteristic, as is the bearing of the entire figure as he stands there. I am glad you are going to give it such a fine location, with pleasant surroundings, and above all, do make it possible for all who so desire to sit and rest study the grand figure and



Above: A northbound Bryant streetcar passes the memorial on the Lyndale Avenue side. Below: Looking down Lowry Hill along Hennepin Avenue at a streetcar passing the memorial. Edwin Nelson photo.





Two days before they disappeared, Lowry gazes upon his creation. Edwin Nelson photo.

expression.”

The public subscription lists were closed on July 10. Though not disclosed directly to the public, it was apparent to the association that the funds available were insufficient to proceed fully with the ambitious plans. A critical opportunity to solicit additional funds privately had been lost due to the self-limiting terms of the public subscription drive.

Nonetheless, on August 7 the Tribune announced that a contract for the stone base had been let to H. N. Leighton & Co. Bitter planned to return to Minneapolis when the stone work had been completed to begin the carving which would be done on site. In the end the actual start of work on the site would be delayed by more than a year.

Bitter’s letters to Kestranek reflected his concerns that the design would need to be cut back. Judge Martin B. Koon, who had been the driving force behind the Memorial, died on August 20 and Bitter found the remaining committee indifferent to moving

forward. An appeal from Bitter to association director Calvin Goodrich to take over went unanswered and the site design was cut back to work with the funds available.

In the spring of 1913 Bitter began work in his studio on a full-scale model of the imposing screen wall, including two allegorical figures representative of civic progress. He described in a letter to Kestranek a subsequent visit from Horace Lowry which would suddenly lead to a break in the budget crisis. “The son of Lowry, who was especially against the large costs, is of a completely different opinion since he saw the full-scale model of the monument. Likewise are the two sons-in-law. All of them are now Feuer und Flamme for the whole affair which was not the case several months ago. It may be that these members of the family fear a curtailment of their inheritance.”

Regardless of their motives, it was Thomas Lowry’s immediate family that bridged the funding gap so that Bitter’s vision including granite site

work could be fully realized – a fact they never acknowledged publicly.

In June Bitter returned to his work on the Lowry portrait sculpture. To harmonize with the casual pose and as a means of enlivening the drab surface of commonplace contemporary clothes, James M. Dennis noted that Bitter allowed the statue to remain “clay-modeled” in bronze to add some textural color. In March 1914 the statue was cast at the bronze foundry.

On October 17 1913 the H. N. Leighton Co. took out building permit B106755 in the name of the Lowry Memorial Commission, listing an estimated cost of \$75,000 and a completion date of October 1 1914. “Work will be carried on this fall as long as weather permits and everything will be in readiness in the spring to complete the task by mid-summer”, the Tribune quoted Leighton, “During the winter, sculpturing work on the granite for the surroundings will be carried on in Hardwick, Vt.”

A final delay occurred near the end of June 1914 when three large panels of Bethel White Granite quarried for the screen wall were rejected at the Woodbury Granite Company in Vermont due to a slight red streak uncovered when facing the huge pieces of stone. The Tribune of June 28 reported that Karl Bitter would “come to Minneapolis soon to begin work on the decorations”.

Due to Bitter’s other commitments he arranged in November with Minneapolis sculptor Charles S. Wells, an assistant of his years earlier, to help look after the two men he was sending to carve the Lowry Memorial panels on site. Wells had moved to Minneapolis in 1910 to work on the carvings for St. Mark’s Episcopal Church. He remained to teach at the Minneapolis School of Art and was enjoying success in executing a variety of private sculpture commissions as well as a fountain for

Gateway Park.

A collection of Wells’ papers at the Minnesota Historical Society includes letters he received from Bitter describe arrangements for granite carving on site. Corrado Novani had worked on the panels of Bitter’s Schurz monument in New York and would direct the Lowry Memorial work in Minneapolis. William Archie would do the lettering and help Novani in preparing the work. Joining them in December was a Mr. Ratti, who had worked for Bitter on the capitol carvings in Madison. The models for each of the flanking allegorical figures were shipped care of H. N. Leighton for Novani and Ratti to execute. In letters typically addressed “Dear Charlie”, Bitter expressed his pleasure to Wells on the progress, and conferred on when he would come to Minneapolis, as his presence would “undoubtedly be needed when the figures are being finished”. On March 31, 1915 Bitter agreed in his letter to the addition of a Mr. O’Brien, who had been working for the Woodbury Granite Company, to assist William Archie in carving work, and informed Wells that he would try to be in Minneapolis himself when the bronze sculpture and candelabra arrived.

On April 10 Wells received a shocking telegram from Western Union reading simply “Karl Bitter was killed in automobile accident last night”. There would be no opportunity for Bitter to review and finish the Lowry Memorial work himself or to participate in its long awaited dedication. On behalf of Bitter’s estate, Wells continued his administrative assistance through June to the final completion of the stone carving work.

The New York Times of April 10 reported, “Among the crowds which left the Metropolitan Opera House at 11:30 o’clock last night were Karl Theodore Francis Bitter, whose work as a sculptor has won him world-wide fame, and his wife, Mrs. Marie Bitter.”

As they tried to cross Broadway to reach the uptown bound car tracks an automobile swung wide to avoid a limousine and struck Mr. Bitter, fatally injuring him.

In an editorial the next day the Times wrote: "Karl Bitter's career was remarkable both for promise and performance. He gained appreciation early. Much of his work was of a public character and it will endure. He was still young enough to justify the hope that he might be capable of even greater achievement. Therefore his sudden death and the manner of it seem the more cruel and pitiable."

As the dedication of the Thomas Lowry Memorial drew closer, the Minneapolis Tribune of July 11 noted that when the monument was finished it would become a memorial to both Thomas Lowry and Karl Bitter.

"Seating for nearly 900 persons will be erected at the triangle where the memorial stands on Lowry Hill" reported the Tribune on August 15. "The invited guests, including the members of the city council and park board, and the Minneapolis Arts commission as representatives of the city, close business associates of Mr. Lowry, and contributors to the Thomas Lowry Memorial association, will first be seated. The invited guests will take up only a small part of the seating capacity provided. All the rest of the room will be available for the general public, which is cordially invited, particularly many old friends of Mr. Lowry who would be glad to honor his memory."

The Saint Paul Pioneer Press of August 19 recounted the unveiling: "Eagerly the two little pairs of hands reached for the ropes which held the veiling over the statue, as Thomas Lowry II and Lowry Hagerman, grandsons of Thomas Lowry, set their tiny weight against the cords. The veiling dropped and before the 2,000 persons, the sunlight shone down on

the kindly features of the statue, with its magnificently carved background. That Karl Bitter, sculptor, had fully realized the breadth of character and undaunted spirit of the man whose memory he sought to perpetuate was evident in his finished product."

"Dr. Marion D. Shutter, pastor of the Church of the Redeemer, which Mr. Lowry attended, spoke at length on 'Thomas Lowry, Citizen'. He referred to the words carved on the stone backing, the idea of the artist, as symbolical of the fact that the heart and soul of the artist were in his work. The two mottoes are: 'Be this community strong and enduring, it will do homage to the men who guided its growth' and 'The lesson of a public-spirited life is as a tree ever bearing new fruit'."

Mayor Nye accepted the memorial, stating as recorded in the Tribune of August 19, "In the name, and for Minneapolis, I accept this beautiful and inspiring statue. To the donors and to those who have a still deeper interest in the statue I give my assurance that it will be ever guarded, preserved and cherished by our people. It will be cherished, not alone because of its beauty and artistic merit, but because of its deep significance. No monument could have a richer meaning. It recalls the past by portraying a leader of that group of citizens of an earlier day, those men of courage, of foresight and of strength, who laid the foundations of our city broad and deep."

"Presented by citizens of today it stands as a symbol of that civic spirit, now so strong among our people to aid in making our city more attractive, more wholesome and in every way more desirable."

"In thus recalling the past and symbolizing the present this statue will surely prove a source of inspiration for the future. It will help to awaken a greater love of city and to arouse a deeper, stronger civic consciousness. In so doing it must prove a vital force in

the future progress and development of this fair city we so deeply love and for whose future welfare we entertain such ardent hope and faith."

A motion picture crew filmed the event for the Tribune Northwest Weekly film, an adjunct of the Minneapolis Tribune's news service. The film was shown the following weeks in 45 theaters throughout the Northwest.

On October 27, 1915, Mrs. Beatrice M. Goodrich Lowry, who had attended, but "was not in good health at the time the splendid memorial figure of her husband was unveiled in Minneapolis last August", died at the home of her daughter in Colorado Springs.

The Lowry home was soon sold by the estate to T. B. Walker, who would build an art gallery on the northern part of the property in 1927. Following the demolition of the home in 1932 the Lowry connection of the Memorial setting was further diminished.

In 1954 the last of Lowry's streetcars

ran past Virginia Triangle and in the 1960's the Memorial site itself was displaced by the Minnesota Highway Department for construction of a tunnel through what had once been the crest of Lowry Hill.

The Minneapolis park board in 1967 moved the bronze statue, sculptured granite setting and ornamental light standards several blocks south along Hennepin avenue to Smith Triangle, a small park at 24th street.

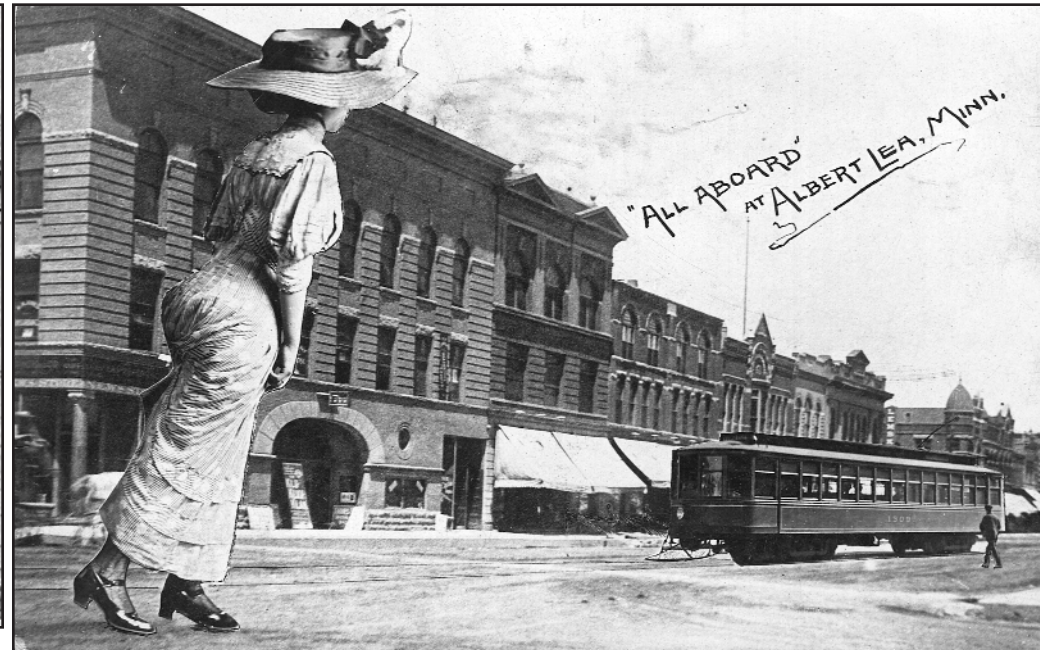
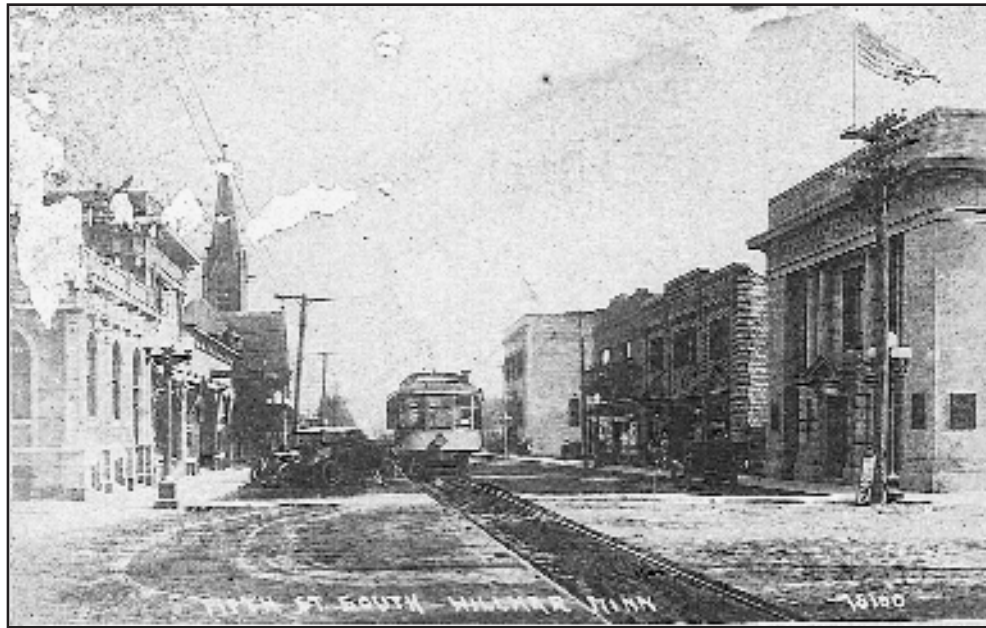
It is appropriate to recognize, as the centennial of the Thomas Lowry Memorial nears, the enduring historic legacy that has been passed down to us as a result of the efforts of his close friends and family. Remaining to this day the outstanding civic monument of Minneapolis, the Thomas Lowry Memorial merits ongoing conservation and care to assure that it continues to serve for generations to come as a tribute to Thomas Lowry and his era of civic optimism and pride.



The memorial as it appears today in the Smith Triangle at 24th and Hennepin, in front of Temple Israel synagogue. Aaron Isaacs photo.

FAKED STREETCARS

The great expansion era for streetcars included the years 1905-1915. By coincidence this was also the golden era of postcards. Every town, no matter how small, had its main street or business district photographed and available for sale at the corner drug store. Local boosterism required showing the town in the best possible light, and having a streetcar line was a point of pride for those that had them. For those that didn't, it was not uncommon to add a fictional trolley to the card. The MSM collection includes a number of these faked streetcar postcards. Considering how poorly the fraud was usually executed, it's doubtful anyone was fooled.





Opposite top: Twin City streetcars miraculously appeared on the streets of Willmar and Albert Lea (along with an unusually tall woman).

Opposite bottom: This pair features poorly drawn trolley poles. On the Cambridge card, the front pole has been reversed. Tiny Kenney, MN sports a Milwaukee Electric interurban.

This page: Look closely and you'll see that these four cards feature the same streetcar, although its size relative to the surroundings seems to vary from puny to monstrous.



Via MINN. CITY RAPID TRANSIT CO'S.
STEAMERS
WAYZATA
—TO—
SPRING PARK.
VIA EL. ELEVATOR and RAILROAD.
122 R
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY
CHICAGO
Via GREEK PORTER RAILWAY.
To WAYZATA.
On Weekdays and on the Sabbath.
122 R | **1st CLASS** 100 CENTS
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY
CHICAGO

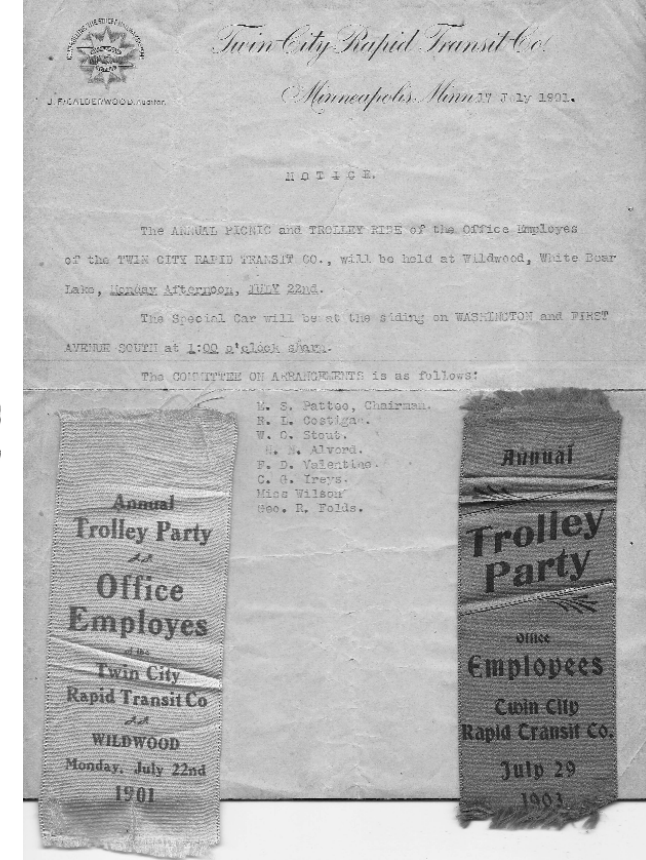
Come with your launches and enjoy the parade. The more the merrier.



The East Side Station Trainmen's Band picnics with family members on Big Island.

EMPLOYEE PICNICS

For many years TCRT held employee picnics at Big Island Park and Wildwood Park. It appears that each department had its own event. As the bulletin at right states, special streetcars were dispatched to haul the employees.



TCRT employees pose in front of their chartered cars at the Wildwood Park station about 1920.



The front cover of the Winter 2011 issue of Twin City Lines shows a snowplow passing streetcar #1239 at Snelling Station. It was 1953 and 1239 was one of many cars stored out of service awaiting scrapping or sale. Here it is again on July 11, 1953, before it was sold for use as a cabin. Minneapolis Star/Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.





MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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August 2021

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